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## **UK COVID-19 INQUIRY**

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### **WITNESS STATEMENT OF DAME BERNADETTE KELLY**

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**I, Dame Bernadette Mary Kelly, DCB, Permanent Secretary at the Department for Transport, Great Minster House, 33 Horseferry Rd, London SW1P 4DR will say as follows.**

1. On 5 November 2024, Emma Morris, the Lead Solicitor for Module 7 of the UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry ("the Inquiry") wrote to me on behalf of Baroness Hallett. In that letter she made a request for a draft corporate witness statement from the Department for Transport ("DfT" or "the Department") under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 ("the Rule 9 Request").
2. I set out below a corporate statement on behalf of DfT to provide an overview of the role the Department played in test, trace and isolate policies ("TTI") between 1 January 2020 and 28 June 2022. I have exhibited key documents to my statement and provide an accompanying Index with additional documentation to be shared with the Inquiry. This Index is provided at Annex A.

#### **My background and the structure of this statement**

3. At the outset I should say something about my own background, as well as how this statement is structured.

4. I became Permanent Secretary at DfT on 18 April 2017. Prior to that I had been Director General of the Rail Group in DfT, which was a post I had held since September 2015. Before that I had been a Director General at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills from April 2010. However, what is perhaps most important for the purposes of this statement, is that I was Permanent Secretary at the DfT from the beginning of the Covid-19 Pandemic ("the Pandemic") and have remained in that post ever since.
5. My previous corporate witness statement relating to Module 2, and published on the Inquiry website, provided an overview of the Department's work during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Given that the Module 2 statement provided information on issues that will also be covered in Module 7, there will be some duplication of the content I provided for Module 2 in this statement. I have therefore included relevant information within this statement so that it can be read and understood alone and without reference to my Module 2 statement.
6. As set out in the Department's application for Core Participant status for Module 7, the primary role of DfT in relation to the scope of Module 7 is in relation to international travel policies. However, in this statement I will also cover the lesser role DfT played in domestic testing, largely in working with the Department of Health and Social Care ("DHSC") to enable transport key workers to access testing facilities.
7. I have drafted this statement with the support of DfT officials that were in post during the Pandemic. This statement reflects my recollection of, and reflections on what happened, what worked well and the difficulties and challenges. However, I have also been dependent on the recollection of DfT officials, and the use of documentation, to assist with recalling all detail.
8. Recognising the range of topics that the Inquiry has asked me to address, I have divided my statement into the following sections and sub-sections, as set out below.

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## BACKGROUND AND DECISION MAKING

### Overview of the work of the Department for Transport

9. Before I address the specific role of the DfT in TTI, it may be helpful if I give an overview of the work of the Department.
10. Transport is largely a devolved policy area. The UK Government develops policy and provides funding for local transport in England, but many funding and policy decisions are made at a local level. Thus, it is at the local level that detailed funding and policy decisions are made in relation to buses, cycling, walking, local road maintenance, and parking.
11. At a national level, the Devolved Administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales have responsibility for transport operations and transport infrastructure within their borders. Maritime and aviation transport are primarily run by the private sector, with ports and airports being privately operated.
12. The DfT is responsible for:
  - (a) providing policy, guidance, and funding to English local authorities to help them run and maintain their road networks, improve passenger and freight travel, and develop new major transport schemes.
  - (b) investing in, maintaining and operating around 4,300 miles of the motorway and trunk road network in England through National Highways.
  - (c) setting the strategic direction for the rail industry in England and Wales – funding investment in infrastructure through Network Rail, awarding and managing rail franchises, and regulating rail fares.
  - (d) improving English bus services through funding and regulation.
  - (e) working to make our roads less congested and polluted by promoting lower carbon transport, including cycling and walking.
  - (f) encouraging the use of new technology such as smart ticketing and low carbon vehicles.
  - (g) maintaining high standards of safety and security in transport.

(h) supporting the maritime sector by producing the overall strategy and planning policy for ports in England and Wales.

(i) setting national aviation policy, working with airlines, airports, the Civil Aviation Authority and NATS (the UK's air traffic service).

### **DfT Decision-Making**

13. The Secretary of State for Transport has overall responsibility for the Department and its public bodies. The Secretary of State is supported by Ministers, the Permanent Secretary, Non-Executive Board Members, and executive Directors General and the officials within their business groups.
14. Throughout the Pandemic, the Secretary of State for Transport ("the SoS") was the Rt Hon Grant Shapps who was appointed as the SoS in July 2019 and was in post until September 2022. A list of all Ministers from January 2020 to September 2022, and the policy portfolios they held responsibility for, is provided at Exhibit BK/M7/001 [INQ000049197].
15. Ministers are supported by Special Advisers ("SpAds") appointed by the SoS. A list of SpAds in post throughout the Pandemic is at Exhibit BK/M7/002 [INQ000049190].
16. Throughout the Pandemic response, the SoS had responsibility for decision-making and setting the policy direction of the Department.
17. The usual method of Ministerial decision-making was through the well-known submissions process. A submission provides written policy advice to Ministers, usually setting out a recommended course of action. Submissions would first go to the relevant junior Minister and SpAds, who would give their views on the advice. SpAds' and Ministerial views would then be collated by a Private Secretary and then put to the SoS, who would make a final decision. Occasionally urgent advice would go to SoS directly, in parallel to Ministers and SpAds.
18. I am responsible for DfT's overall management, and Principal Accounting Officer for the Department. DfT's day to day work is steered by me and the Executive Committee ("ExCo"), which I chair. In January 2022 Gareth Davies was appointed as Second Permanent Secretary. While in post, Gareth worked with me on all aspects of DfT's leadership and had specific responsibility for cross-cutting issues such as decarbonisation, security, and economic growth. The Second Permanent Secretary was also responsible for DfT's work with the aviation and maritime sectors.

19. Prior to his appointment to Second Permanent Secretary in January 2022, Gareth Davies was the Director General for Aviation, Maritime, International and Security Group ("AMIS"). Gareth Davies left the Department for Transport in January 2023, to take up the position of Permanent Secretary at the Department for International Trade (as of February 2023, the Department for Business and Trade).
20. A list of members of DfT's Executive Committee during the Pandemic is provided at Exhibit BK/M7/003 [INQ000049287].
21. Key individuals in relation to Module 7 were as follows:

#### **International**

- (a) Gareth Davies, Senior Responsible Owner, International Restart, and Director General, Aviation, Maritime, International and Security Group, see Exhibit BK/M7/0004 [INQ000049283];
- (b) Rannia Leontaridi, Director, Aviation, January–2020–December 2021, then Director General, Aviation, Maritime, International and Security Group, January 2022–present; and
- (c) Tiwalola Fadina, Deputy Director, International Travel, November 2020–October 2022.

#### **Domestic**

- (d) Emma Ward, Senior Responsible Owner, Domestic Restart, and Director General, Roads, Places and Environment Group (now Road Transport Group).
- (e) Conrad Bailey, Director, Covid-19 Gold Policy<sup>1</sup>, later Covid-19 Directorate, March 2020 - December 2020.
- (f) Matthew Lodge, Director, Covid-19 Gold Policy, later Covid-19 Directorate, March 2020 - July 2020;
- (g) Sara Skodbo, Director, Covid-19 Directorate, June 2020 - January 2021.
- (h) Abi Hayes, Director, Covid-19 Directorate, January 2021 – July 2022; and

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<sup>1</sup> Gold Policy was the Director-level role in response teams.

(i) Iain Forbes, Director, Covid-19 Directorate, January 2021 - March 2022.

### **Decision-Making During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

22. The Covid-19 Operations Committee ("COVID-O") was the key decision-making forum for Covid-19 related policy throughout the Pandemic, once it was established in May 2020. Decisions on border measures were primarily agreed by Ministers through this forum. Ministers considered Joint Biosecurity Centre ("JBC")/UK Health Security Agency ("UKHSA") risk assessments, alongside wider public health factors, and the implications of travel restriction implementation.
23. DfT was involved in collective decision-making through the COVID-O forum, and the SoS joined COVID-O when a relevant transport or borders-related item was on the agenda. During the Pandemic, DfT wrote or co-wrote papers for 38 COVID-O meetings on border related issues. A full list of these papers, including a short summary is provided at Exhibit BK/M7/005 [INQ000527805].
24. The Inquiry requested that I exhibit to my statement any core documents that are highly pertinent to the issues being examined on Module 7. The Department has identified the papers that pertained to the implementation of new policies, or a substantive change of policy. I exhibit these documents to the statement, BK/M7/006 [INQ000049049], BK/M7/007 [INQ000053617], BK/M7/008 [INQ000053792], BK/M7/009 [INQ000053752], BK/M7/010 [INQ000527738], BK/M7/011 [INQ000527740], BK/M7/012 [INQ000527741], BK/M7/013 [INQ000527743], BK/M7/014 [INQ000091295], BK/M7/015 [INQ000528084], BK/M7/016, [INQ000527749], BK/M7/017 [INQ000527742], BK/M7/018 [INQ000527756], BK/M7/019 [INQINQ000410753], BK/M7/020 [INQ000527757], BK/M7/021 [INQ000054459], BK/M7/022 [INQ000054510], BK/M7/023 [INQ000054918], BK/M7/024 [INQ000092426], BK/M7/025 [INQ000527770], BK/M7/026 [INQ000436521], BK/M7/027 [INQ000527784], and I also exhibit a table summarising the documents, see Exhibit BK/M7/028 [INQ000527807].

### **POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN RELATION TO TTI**

25. I will first provide some high-level context to the measures that were implemented during the Pandemic.
26. The Government's top priority when considering international travel was to protect public health. The broad aims of travel measures were to reopen international travel



safely, mitigate against the risk of Variants of Concern ("VOCs), and not disrupt the functioning of systems at the border. It was also vital to maintain international supply chains, given that many of the UK's critical goods and components, including food, medicines and medical equipment, are imported from overseas. The balance between these objectives necessarily fluctuated as the Pandemic evolved. To assist in understanding these changes, a timeline of the border measures, when they were implemented and relaxed is exhibited at BK/M7/029 [INQ000527804].

27. Between January and March 2020, as Covid-19 infections increased internationally, restrictions on international travel tightened. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office ("FCDO") began to change travel advice, recommending on 27 January that British citizens avoid all but essential travel to mainland China, see Exhibit BK/M7/030 [INQ000527799], and this later expanded to other countries as the Pandemic spread. DHSC published advice advising travellers returning from high-risk countries to isolate, Exhibit BK/M7/031 [INQ000119620].
28. During this time the DfT supported the FCDO's work to repatriate British Nationals from abroad. This work was initially focussed on supporting British Nationals to return from Wuhan through Government chartered flights and then extended to other countries that implemented early travel restrictions. A particular challenge was cruise ships being refused entry into ports. For example, in March 2020 the MS Braemar cruise ship was refused entry to Barbados and was required to divert to Cuba, see Exhibit BK/M7/032 [INQ000049210].
29. The tightening of travel advice led to increased financial pressure for airlines, airports, maritime and international rail sectors as passenger numbers dropped. A summary of transport data in March 20 sets out the impact of the Pandemic on passenger numbers, see Exhibit BK/M7/033 [INQ000527724]. In response to increased restrictions airlines cancelled flights, and most cruise operators voluntarily suspended operations. A summary of cancellations and restrictions provided to Ministers in mid-March 2020 is provided at Exhibit BK/M7/034 [INQ000527723].
30. Throughout March 2020, domestic public health restrictions in the UK increased. On 12 March guidance was published advising symptomatic individuals to stay at home. On 17 March, the Foreign Secretary advised against all non-essential travel overseas. Then on 23 March the Prime Minister told the UK public to 'Stay at Home' as the first national lockdown came into force on 26 March.

31. On 10 May 2020 the PM announced a phased domestic reopening of the UK, and self-isolation for passengers arriving in the UK, saying *that “to prevent re-infection from abroad, I am serving notice that it will soon be the time – with transmission significantly lower – to impose quarantine on people coming into this country”*, Exhibit BK/M7/035 [INQ000065338]. This was confirmed in ‘*Our plan to rebuild: The UK Government’s COVID-19 recovery strategy*’,], that was published on 11 May, Exhibit BK/M7/036 [INQ000527792]. On 8 June border health measures were introduced by the Home Office requiring all UK arrivals to self-isolate for 14 days and complete the Passenger Locator Form (see more at point 127).
32. These measures led to a large drop in travel - both domestically and internationally. International travel fell by 70% over the first eight months of 2020, compared to 2019, see Exhibit BK/M7/037 [INQ000049273]. Given this impact, DfT’s policies aimed to allow safe travel in order to mitigate wider economic and social impacts of restrictions, including the economic impact of restrictions on the travel sector.

#### **International Travel**

33. I will now set out the role and involvement that the Department for Transport had in TTI policies. I will first outline the international policies that the Department was involved in and then cover domestic testing later in my statement.
34. During the Pandemic, policy development and implementation of health measures at the international border was not run as a single programme, Departments were responsible for managing individual policy areas. The DfT led on the following areas of international health measures so far as they related to borders and international travel:
  - (a) Establishing the initial Travel Corridors regime, which came into effect from 10 July 2020 and ran until 17 May 2021.
  - (b) Establishing the Global Travel Taskforce (“GTT”) in October 2020, with DHSC, which led to the development of Test to Release (“TTR”).
  - (c) Leading the work of the second GTT, established in February 2021, to work in partnership with industry and international partners to develop a risk-based framework that could facilitate the return of international travel.
  - (d) Overseeing the regulation of private sector air, maritime and rail companies (“carriers” or “operators”) that transport passengers.

- (e) From July 2020, managing the process for agreeing exemptions from border health measures for certain groups of workers. This was necessary to maintain critical national infrastructure and essential services, including the flow of goods to England.
  - (f) In December 2020, following the closure of the French border due to the identification and spread of a new variant of Covid-19 (Beta variant), DfT took on responsibility for Haulier Covid-19 testing on behalf of DHSC. Tests for hauliers were provided at key advice and information sites to ensure hauliers met international testing obligations. This initiative eventually led to the bespoke testing scheme, outlined in point 96.
  - (g) Leading engagement with the transport sector to explain and operationalise measures and gather any operational feedback.
35. While not directly covered in the scope of Module 7, it is important context to consider that the phased reopening of international travel was undertaken alongside the Covid-19 vaccination programme led by DHSC, which began in December 2020.
36. From Summer 2021, DfT led the development, in collaboration with other Departments (the DHSC, the FCDO, the Home Office and the Devolved Administrations), of the policy to reduce travel restrictions for eligible fully vaccinated arrivals. Given that vaccine certification was a key mechanism for reopening travel, DfT led the phased roll-out of countries and territories from which vaccine certificates were accepted (starting with the UK, then EU and US, then other countries and territories on a phased basis) and the assessment of vaccine certificates to ensure they met agreed criteria and were assessed for fraud risks.

**Other Government Departments, organisations and external agencies the DfT worked with in relation to TTI policy**

37. The other Government Departments, organisations and external agencies the DfT worked with in relation to TTI policy and decision making are set out below.
38. In terms of other Departments:
- (a) The Cabinet Office acted as the central coordinator for decision-making (through the Covid-19 Taskforce and COVID-O forum). Cabinet Office coordinated departmental perspectives and convened COVID-O meetings and papers

ensuring departmental positions were considered into decision making processes.

- (b) Public Health England ("PHE") and the JBC were responsible for providing public health advice, monitoring global levels of Covid-19 infection and emerging Variants Under Investigation and VOCs.
  - (c) NHS Test and Trace ("NHS T&T") was responsible for the provision of testing services for international arrivals, and for International Arrivals Compliance ("IAC") calls to confirm self-isolation compliance for non-Red List arrivals, as well as referring cases where there was a concern about compliance to Mitie for follow-up visits.
  - (d) UKHSA was formed on 1 October 2021, merging the services provided by PHE, JBC, and NHS T&T into a single Executive Agency of the Department of Health and Social Care ("DHSC"). UKHSA was responsible for providing public health risk assessments to Ministers and developing the contingency plans.
  - (e) DHSC was responsible for the provision and the operation of the Managed Quarantine Service for Red List arrivals (before this transferred to UKHSA), as well as for coordinating advice to Ministers from the other health related bodies (mainly PHE, NHS T&T and subsequently UKHSA when it was formed). DHSC was responsible for testing requirements and overseeing the private testing markets for people travelling to the UK. DHSC in coordination with DfT were also responsible for drafting and making amendments to regulations.
  - (f) Home Office/Border Force was responsible for the implementation of the Passenger Locator Form and ensuring the border measures were being followed by international arrivals at the border. The Home Office had responsibility for implementing checks by Border Force officials the border, where appropriate, and for issuing penalties to passengers.
  - (g) The FCDO provided Travel Advice, undertook diplomatic engagement to provide information about other countries' approaches to testing and health measures, and worked with the UKHSA to gather additional health data where needed.
39. As public health is a devolved matter, both domestic and international measures were determined in each of the Four Nations. However, in the case of international travel, alignment was strongly preferable as it was easier for international passengers

arriving in the UK to understand UK-wide measures, and to support Border Force in managing restrictions at the border. Therefore, DfT also engaged with the Devolved Administrations via the forums outlined below.

### **International Travel Transport Strategy Meetings**

40. Throughout the Pandemic, DfT chaired an International Travel Transport Strategy meeting with the Devolved Administrations, see Exhibit BK/M7/038 [INQ000049083]. The aim of the meetings was to coordinate work on international travel policy. The first of these meetings was held on 21 July 2020 and continued regularly until 21 June 2022. The representatives who attended this set of meetings were: DfT officials, and officials from the Scottish Government, Welsh Government, Northern Ireland Executive, Border Force, FCDO, DHSC, Cabinet Office, and UKHSA.
41. This forum allowed DfT to engage in early policy development and understand different views across the Devolved Administrations and HMG, to communicate where England-only decisions had been made and try to achieve policy alignment across the Four Nations. It was also an opportunity to ensure that all had mutual understanding of decisions made by Ministers so that there was practical coordination and alignment of the detail (for instance relevant legislative drafting) ahead of go-live dates.

### **International Travel Programme Board (“ITPB”)**

42. DfT also chaired the ITPB, see Exhibit BK/M7/039 [INQ000049270]. DfT’s Aviation Director or International Travel Deputy Director chaired the meetings and the ITPB’s membership included senior officials from across Government, including the Devolved Administrations. The ITPB served as a policy development forum to exchange views from Ministers, key priorities, and any implementation issues.

### **Organisations**

43. DfT held regular meetings with the travel industry, and transport operators, throughout the Pandemic. This included ad-hoc engagement with individual operators and companies, but also more formalised industry forums. Below I provide information on some key forums, illustrating the organisations DfT engaged with.

### **Global Travel Taskforce**

44. The Government launched the GTT to develop plans for reopening in a safe and sustainable way, working in close collaboration with industry. Membership of the GTT was cross-modal and included industry representatives from across aviation,

maritime and international rail. A full list of the GTT membership is exhibited at BK/M7/037 [INQ000049273]. More information on the GTT is covered at point 65 in this statement.

### **Expert Steering Group**

45. An Expert Steering Group (“ESG”) was set up by the DfT to bring together interested parties from across government and industry to co-produce solutions to the significant impact of Covid-19, with the focus on helping restart and recover UK aviation. The aim of the group was to make decisions, with several smaller subgroups, focusing on specific issues such as airbridges. The first meeting was held on 6 May 2020.
46. Membership of the ESG comprised of representatives from a range of airports, airlines, unions and industry bodies and regulators, along with a cross section of Whitehall, PHE/ DHSC and representatives from all the Devolved Administrations as appropriate. The core membership of the group is set out in Exhibit BK/M7/040 [INQ000528083].

### **External Agencies**

47. The Civil Aviation Authority (“CAA”) acted as the regulator for the aviation sector. Throughout the Pandemic, DfT officials and the CAA worked closely with Border Force and carriers to ensure robust enforcement and to increase compliance.
48. The CAA also supported DfT in distributing updates to aviation operators via their SIREN notice system. The CAA SIREN system is an emergency messaging system used by the CAA to inform the aviation industry of urgent updates, including security and safety. DfT used the CAA SIREN system to disseminate key major updates to industry about policy changes, including changes to the red list of countries, flight bans, changes to health measures or new iterations of the operational guidance document.
49. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (“MCA”) undertook Passenger Locator Form (“PLF”) compliance checks, working alongside Border Force colleagues. The MCA worked initially with ferry operators and then engaged with cruise operators to ensure that requirements were met when international cruise recommenced from August 2021.
50. The Office of Rail and Road (“ORR”) took on the role of regulating the international rail sector for the purposes of border health measures. This was a new role for ORR and DfT officials worked closely with ORR from January 2021 onwards, to develop

and stand up an effective enforcement regime and to facilitate engagement with Border Force and other regulators to iterate this as border health measures evolved.

51. In practice, ORR was responsible for regulating just two carriers – Eurostar and Eurotunnel (passenger shuttles), so the level of enforcement activity was lower relative to other modes due to the size of the sector.

## INTERNATIONAL TTI POLICIES

52. I will now provide an overview of DfT's role in the development of specific TTI policies. I will first outline the international policies that the Department was involved in and then cover domestic testing later in my statement.
53. I provide information on each policy below, in the chronological order of which they were implemented.

### Travel Corridors

54. In May 2020 the Transport SoS requested advice on 'air-bridges', Exhibit BK/M7/041 [INQ000527730], where the self-isolation requirement could be waived for arrivals from countries with low Covid-19 infections. DfT officials provided advice on the proposal, see Exhibits BK/M7/042 [INQ000527731] and BK/M7/043 [INQ000049039]. This system eventually became known as the Travel Corridors system.
55. DfT led on the proposals for a Travel Corridor system and the SoS presented a paper on this policy at the COVID-O meeting on 11 June 2020, Exhibit BK/M7/006 [INQ000049049]. The paper set out that the Travel Corridors process sought to facilitate as frictionless as possible travel, while protecting public health. At the meeting it was agreed that the UK should "[a]mend regulations and reach an agreement with another country to drop self-isolation requirements for arrivals on a reciprocal basis and any additional measures that may be needed if that country is of a higher risk nature (e.g. testing) through a framework that introduces robust but flexible scientific criteria. Such an agreement is known as an international travel corridor", as exhibited at BK/M7/044 [INQ000049051], BK/M7/045 [INQ000049052, BK/M7/046 [INQ000049053].
56. The Travel Corridor process came into effect from 10 July 2020 and ran until 17 May 2021. It was implemented through *The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel and Public Health Information) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020*, Exhibit BK/M7/047 [INQ000049233]. Ministerial decisions on international travel were

informed by risk assessments provided by JBC, working closely with PHE, using a methodology endorsed by the four Chief Medical Officers of the UK, see Exhibit BK/M7/048 [INQ000049234].

57. Initially the Travel Corridors process was coordinated by DHSC and DfT, see Exhibits BK/M7/043 [INQ000049039], BK/M7/049 [INQ000049038], BK/M7/050 [INQ000049271]. The JBC presented their risk assessment to Home Office, DfT, FCDO, and DHSC Ministers in a weekly meeting arranged by DHSC. Ministers agreed changes for England.
58. Ministers usually reviewed the countries and territories on the travel corridor list for England weekly. Countries and all Overseas Territories were added to the Travel Corridors list when the policy was first introduced on 10 July 2020, see Exhibit BK/M7/051 [INQ000049139].
59. Changes to the travel corridors list were made by DfT as required using statutory instruments (SIs) to amend the Regulations. The list of individual SIs making changes to the Travel Corridor lists are set out in Exhibit BK/M7/052 [INQ000049188].
60. In the UK, public health is a devolved matter. Therefore, both domestic and international measures were determined in each of the four nations. However, in the case of international travel, alignment was strongly preferable as it was easier for international passengers arriving in the UK to understand UK-wide measures, especially given the concentration of traffic at ports in England during the Pandemic, which led to more passengers bound for Scotland and Wales, in particular, arriving in England, and thus encountering more than one set of rules between port of arrival and final destination. Having four nations approach also supported Border Force with enforcing restrictions at the Border.
61. The SoS met with Ministers in the Devolved Administrations to discuss changes across the UK and to secure four nation alignment. Details of the meetings to discuss the transport response to the Pandemic that took place at Ministerial and official level with the Devolved Administrations.
62. After every review of travel corridor arrangements in England was completed, the SoS wrote to UK Ministers (at the Home Office, the FCDO, and DHSC<sup>2</sup>) and Devolved

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<sup>2</sup> The Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Secretary of State for the Department for Culture Media and Sport, the Secretary of State for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Prime Minister's Private Secretary were copied into this correspondence.



Administration Ministers to confirm the changes to be made. An example of the letters sent to UK Ministers and the Devolved Administrations are provided at Exhibits BK/M7/053 [INQ000049058], BK/M7/054 [INQ000049059], BK/M7/055 [INQ000049060], BK/M7/056 [INQ000049069]. DfT also used the working-level International Travel Strategy Board, and ITPB (as set out in point 42) at senior official level to communicate and discuss policy changes across government and to the Devolved Administrations. Throughout the Pandemic the Devolved Administrations broadly aligned with international travel measures, although there was occasionally minor divergence (for example Scotland had a different age threshold for tests for international arrivals).

63. From October 2020, DfT led on co-ordinating Ministerial input, with decisions being made at weekly COVID-O meetings. JBC presented a risk assessment to officials recommending which countries should have their risk rating changed. This was presented at a weekly data meeting (usually on a Wednesday) which was attended by DfT, Home Office, DHSC, FCDO Ministers and key senior officials from those Departments, JBC and Cabinet Office-led Covid-19 Task Force (that coordinated the Government's collective response to the Pandemic). DfT would use the Ministerial steers and JBC risk assessment from this meeting to draft the COVID-O paper recommending Travel Corridor changes for England. The Devolved Administrations were invited to COVID-O but not the earlier meeting. Unless presenting, officials were generally observing the Ministerial meeting rather than playing an active role in the discussion.
64. While the Travel Corridors assessment process usually ran weekly, this could be escalated, and legislation changed more frequently in cases where a travel corridor needed to be removed, or additional restrictions implemented. A notable example of how this process worked in practice was the emergence of "SARS-CoV-2" in Denmark in November 2020, when the confirmed transfer from mink to humans resulted in the emergency removal of Denmark from the Travel Corridor List on 6 November 2020, following a request from the CMO for England, see Exhibit BK/M7/057 [INQ000049086]. On 18 January 2021, all Travel Corridors were suspended, and pre-departure testing ("PDT") and a 10-day self-isolation period was introduced for all arrivals to protect the progress being made on the vaccination programme and to prevent the spread of new VOCs into the UK, see Exhibit BK/M7/058 [INQ000049191]. This is discussed further below.

## Global Travel Taskforce

65. The Prime Minister set up the GTT on 7 October 2020, see Exhibits BK/M7/059 [INQ000049067] and BK/M7/060 [INQ000049068]. The GTT was a temporary forum, jointly chaired by the Transport SoS and Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to consider how a testing regime for international arrivals could be implemented to boost safe travel to and from the UK. More broadly, the GTT considered what steps could be taken to increase consumer confidence and reduce the barriers to a safe and sustainable recovery of international travel.
66. The Health Secretary and the SoS shared the first GTT report, Exhibit BK/M7/037 [INQ000049273] with the Prime Minister on 24 November 2020 via their Private Offices. The report made 14 recommendations, outlined in Exhibit BK/M7/037 [INQ000049273], to ensure clear public health measures, increase demand safely and take the lead on global standards. All recommendations were accepted by the Prime Minister and the report was published publicly on GOV.UK.

## Test to Release

67. The main recommendation from the first report, which was agreed by the Prime Minister, Exhibit BK/M7/061 [INQ000049093], was the introduction of the TTR policy, Exhibit BK/M7/016 [INQ000527749].
68. TTR was a regime for international arrivals that allowed people to leave self-isolation early (before 10 days) following a negative result from a Day 5 PCR ("Polymerase Chain Reaction") test – and was implemented on 15 December 2020, see Exhibits BK/M7/037 [INQ000049273], BK/M7/062 [INQ000049286], BK/M7/063 [INQ000049087], BK/M7/064 [INQ000049088], BK/M7/065 [INQ000049089], BK/M7/066 [INQ000090909], BK/M7/067 [INQ000049091]. TTR included the establishment of a market for TTR travel tests.
69. DfT led for the most part on TTR, under the *Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (England) (Amendment) (No. 26) Regulations 2020*, which were signed by the SoS, see Exhibits BK/M7/068 [INQ000049094], BK/M7/069 [INQ000049095], BK/M7/070 [INQ000049096], BK/M7/071 [INQ000049097], BK/M7/072 [INQ000049098], BK/M7/073 [INQ000049099], BK/M7/074 [INQ000049100], BK/M7/075 [INQ000049101], BK/M7/076 [INQ000049102], BK/M7/077 [INQ000049103]. DHSC provided legal and policy input into the SI and also led on the accreditation of private testing market providers who supplied TTR tests. As the changes were made under the International Travel Regulations, they

were required by the statutory instrument to be reviewed by the SoS every 28 days. In May 2021, this became the responsibility of DHSC (and therefore the DHSC Secretary of State).

### **The Second Global Travel Taskforce**

70. The second GTT was established in February 2021 at the request of the Prime Minister, see Exhibit BK/M7/078 [INQ000049235]. This taskforce was led by DfT and was tasked to work in partnership with industry and international partners to develop a risk-based framework that could facilitate the safe return of international travel, whilst still containing the risk from imported cases and variants. On 7 April 2021, the SoS sent the second GTT report to the Prime Minister, Exhibit BK/M7/079 [INQ000049134], who shared some amendments on 8 April, see Exhibits BK/M7/080 [INQ000049211] and BK/M7/081 [INQ000049212], which were minor and did not impact on the overall policy. The report was published on 9 April 2021, Exhibit BK/M7/082 [INQ000049274].
71. A key recommendation of the second GTT report was to remove measures limiting outbound travel by 17 May 2021 and to implement a 'traffic light' system ("TLS"), to which different restrictions were applied to different countries according to risk (discussed further below). The TLS came into operation on 17 May 2021. The report set out that the measures should be reviewed at regular 'checkpoints' (set at no later than on the 28 June, 31 July and 1 October 2021).
72. Following a recommendation in the GTT report, DfT also led on the introduction of a passenger Covid-19 Charter ("Charter") setting out consumer rights and responsibilities whilst travel measures were in place, which was published on the 17 May 2021, Exhibit BK/M7/083 [INQ000049236].
73. The Charter included information on what people travelling internationally were entitled to through their passenger rights, how to stay safe abroad and the expectations on travel providers when a booking was made, and if something went wrong. The Charter also set out the passenger's own responsibilities to ensure a smooth journey.

### **Pre-departure Testing**

74. As indicated above, on 18 January 2021, all Travel Corridors were suspended, and PDT and a 10-day self-isolation period was introduced for all arrivals to protect the

progress being made on the vaccination programme and to prevent the spread of new variants of concern into the UK, see Exhibit BK/M7/058 [INQ000049191].

75. From 15 January, the Government introduced pre-departure test requirements for all inbound passengers to England to take a test up to 3 days before departure and provide evidence of a negative result on arrival in the UK.
76. This decision followed a presentation and paper by the SoS at COVID-O on 7 January 2021, BK/M7/084 [INQ000049119], which was agreed. The decision to bring in PDT was in response to the increasing incidence of Covid-19 and the emergence of new variants, both domestically and internationally, see Exhibit BK/M7/085 [INQ000049192]. It coincided with the implementation of the second lockdown.
77. The public health rationale for this was that PDT could significantly reduce the proportion of people travelling to and entering England while they were infectious. The risk of transmission to other travellers while in transport could be reduced substantially, with the protective effect from PDT increasing the closer the test was taken to departure. However, the COVID-O paper did set out that a significant residual proportion of infections would still reach the UK.

#### **Haulier Testing**

78. On Sunday 20 December 2020 following the sudden closure of the French border due to the identification and spread of a new variant of Covid-19 (the Beta variant first detected in South Africa). By 20:00 on 22 December approximately 4000 HGVs were parked in Kent, see Exhibit BK/M7/086 [INQ000528087]. Whilst Covid testing was a DHSC policy, it did not have the resources to identify, stand up and run mass haulier testing sites to clear this backlog and deliver future testing. Therefore, DfT became the Department responsible for haulier testing due to the urgency of the border crisis to restrict the transmission of the virus both domestically and across the UK's borders, whilst ensuring that the number of unready hauliers entering Kent was kept to a minimum. By introducing a robust and mandatory testing regime approved by the French, it sought to minimise the risk of the spread of new variant. Testing hauliers was deemed essential to maintain the flow of priority goods, to mitigate the effect on supply chains and to retain and protect skilled hauliers.
79. Two days later, on 22 December 2020, a Protocol was agreed between the French Government and the UK Government to allow the resumption of travel across the borders, Exhibit BK/M7/087 [INQ000049245]. The approach to use a Protocol was

supported as hauliers presented a low risk to public health from Covid-19 transmission as they are generally solitary workers, who have limited interactions with the wider public and public spaces. The Protocol included the need to obtain a negative LFT result prior to boarding transport destined for the EU and applied regardless of nationality. DfT was heavily involved in ensuring the Protocol's implementation. While French officials drafted the documentation and led on its presentation, officials in DfT provided feedback, and the SoS approved the changes. On 22 December 2020, the SoS was briefed ahead of a meeting with the Prime Minister to update him on the progress of the drafting, see Exhibit BK/M7/088 [INQ000049207].

80. DfT was responsible for issuing new updated guidance to hauliers. On 22 December 2020, the "HGV Operators and Drivers Crossing an International Border" guidance was published, providing hauliers with guidance on staying safe within their cabs and on their journeys, Exhibit BK/M7/089 [INQ000527753]. The SoS wrote to all haulage industry trade bodies on 22 December 2020 informing them of the introduction of the Protocol and updated guidance, see Exhibit BK/M7/090 [INQ000527752].
81. In addition to France, several other EU countries including Germany, Spain and Belgium all introduced their own restrictions from 1 January 2021, so there was a need to design a system that worked for all countries, but that was proportionate and straightforward to implement.
82. Covid testing for other sectors was delivered by DHSC or could be absorbed by businesses, however road haulage was unique given the geographical dispersal, with around 85% hauliers travelling through the Short Straits<sup>3</sup> between the Kent Coast and Northern France being non-UK based. Hauliers were also not able to access testing in the community as most others were. This was due to their working patterns and the lack of sites that could accommodate HGVs and, in many cases, no UK permanent address or phone number to register and receive results.
83. The haulier testing system was designed to make testing accessible and convenient, using existing and trusted structures that were already familiar to the haulage community. DfT had been providing face-to-face support to hauliers since October 2020 through a network of Information and Advice Sites ("IAS") across the UK as part

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<sup>3</sup> The trading routes across the narrowest parts of the English Channel between Kent and France

of preparations for the end of the transition period and leaving the EU on 31 December 2020. The aim of this work was to ensure that trade was maintained, to minimise impacts on supply chains and to minimise traffic disruption. Providing Covid-19 testing for hauliers at IAS provided hauliers with a one stop shop for both their border readiness for Brexit and Covid-19 testing. The locations of the IAS were easy to reach and access for hauliers and their heavy goods vehicles.

84. A key part of the service was that it was free of charge to hauliers. Hauliers typically have very low profit margins (industry reports at the time confirmed a profit margin of 1-3%) and are often self-employed, so any costs would be absorbed directly by drivers themselves. Making testing expensive, harder to access and more onerous would inevitably have resulted in non-compliance. Drivers would have avoided the UK altogether, causing significant disruption to supply chains and exacerbating labour supply shortages within the haulage industry.
85. DfT initially provided Covid-19 testing for hauliers leaving the UK with the assistance of the military via a MACA ("Military Aid to the Civil Authorities") request to the Ministry of Defence ("MOD"), see Exhibit BK/M7/086 [INQ000528087]. This cost was also borne by DfT. The MACA was used to stand up the testing and driver welfare efforts at extremely short notice, in Dover and the M20 until 15 January 2021. The Department arranged for contractors to undertake the testing and the backlog from the closure on the 20 December was cleared by 26 December.
86. Haulier testing was also initially set up for four weeks at Sevington and Manston Inland Border Facilities ("IBFs") as part of the MACA request. The testing provision though was set up differently to the IAS due to the location of the sites and their HGV parking capacity, to minimise further traffic disruption within Kent. On 28 January 2021 the military support was extended for an additional two weeks, this was so that the Department could confirm commercial arrangements to support future testing were in place, see Exhibit BK/M7/091 [INQ000527761].
87. Manston and Sevington IBF differed from the rest of the IAS due to their ability to provide PCR tests for drivers if they had an initial positive Lateral Flow Test ("LFT"). This form of testing was made possible through each site having its own medical centre. If a driver received a positive LFT, then a PCR test was undertaken on site and sent to an offsite laboratory. Due to the HGV parking capacity at both sites (approximately 4000 at Manston and 1000 at Sevington) the driver could park up and wait for their results. If the PCR came back positive the driver was sent to one of the

isolation hotels to complete their isolation period. As set out in Exhibit BK/M7/092 [INQ000527755], these hotels were free to hauliers to encourage compliance with the testing regime and reduce the welfare and public health risks of hauliers seeking to self-isolate in their cabs. If the PCR came back negative, then the driver was free to carry on with their journey.

88. This approach helped manage the risk of increased traffic management disruption in Kent. It also took into consideration pressure from local NHS stakeholders who had expressed concerns about their capacity and any gridlocks that may have obstructed/delayed access for emergency services between site and near-by hospital.
89. The request also included additional MACA support to establish Covid-19 LFT testing facilities at 35 of DfT's IASs across England. This was the only feasible solution at the time, given the practical difficulties for hauliers accessing testing via the NHS website or local pharmacies. Collective agreement at X(O) Committee<sup>4</sup> on 29 December 2020 formalised this decision, Exhibit BK/M7/093 [INQ000527754].
90. DfT management of the haulier testing programme was designed to flex to meet the needs of hauliers and demands from different countries. In December 2021 with the emergence of the Omicron variant, Germany introduced a more stringent PCR testing requirement for hauliers entering the country. It was the third time Germany introduced a testing requirement for hauliers coming from the UK, after removing it previously. Denmark and the Netherlands also had similar requirements, in addition to France and Germany as illustrated at Exhibit BK/M7/094 [INQ000565853]. DfT continued to provide clear guidance, see Exhibit BK/M7/089 [INQ000527753], and strong messaging to hauliers ensuring high levels of testing compliance.
91. By January 2022, almost one million hauliers had been tested at more than 40 testing locations across England with positivity rates remaining low, between 0.1-0.6% throughout the testing programme, see Exhibit BK/M7/095 [INQ000527785]. Ministers agreed that for as long as border readiness was required DfT would maintain responsibility for haulier testing. This lasted until 31 March 2022, when DfT's Haulier Outreach Programme was due to end and with it the provision for haulier testing would cease, Exhibit BK/M7/096 [INQ000527788].

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<sup>4</sup> XO was a Cabinet Committee, established to prepare for the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.

92. DfT responded to a DHSC write round (the written process for obtaining collective agreement via a Cabinet Committee) on the removal of bespoke testing for international travel. The response from SoS made clear that the cost of future testing should be borne by the transport industry and not by DfT, see Exhibit BK/M7/097 [INQ000527787], but that DfT was keen to support DHSC with contingency planning.
93. In addition, I wrote to DHSC's Permanent Secretary, Sir Christopher Wormald, highlighting that DfT would no longer have a contract in place to facilitate testing for hauliers beyond 31 March 2022 and that DfT would no longer carry out haulier testing. The letter, Exhibit BK/M7/098 [INQ000527803], provided a clear steer that DHSC should take on responsibility for haulier testing, should the bespoke testing regime, including the management of the hotel provision for hauliers, remain in place beyond March 2022.
94. Leading up to the end of March 2022 DfT officials continued to work with DHSC to find an alternative solution that created minimal friction for supply chains that were essential to maintaining the flow of priority goods and retaining skilled haulier. DfT worked with DHSC to develop a Standard Operating Procedure and progress a move towards unobserved testing, as the testing regime was demonstrating the very low levels of infections in the haulier community.
95. Following on from the HMG announcement of 'COVID-19 Response: Living with COVID-19' on 21 February 2022 and the removal of the remaining legal restrictions on 24 February, DfT's Haulier Outreach Programme ended on 31 March 2022, with DHSC taking on the lead on any future testing needs.

### **Bespoke Testing**

96. As outlined above, supervised haulier testing was introduced in December 2020. That model of targeted testing schemes was followed by a bespoke testing scheme that was introduced in April 2021. Before the introduction of bespoke testing, all transport workers, except coach drivers, were exempt from the requirement to undergo post-arrival testing. However, the Deputy Chief Medical Officer advised that any exemptions weakened the level of public health protection provided by the border measures and he recommended that these weaknesses should be mitigated by bespoke testing arrangements, see Exhibit BK/M7/099 [INQ000527764].
97. The aim of the measure was to ensure that testing took place in work cohorts that travelled regularly, or were required to travel at short notice, to help safeguard the



flow of critical goods and services. DHSC managed the policy of the scheme whilst DfT delivered it through engagement with the transport sector. Other Departments also benefited from the scheme, for example, Defra which allowed seasonal workers to self-isolate and test whilst continuing to work.

98. DfT worked with DHSC to define criteria for testing regimes and DfT provided feedback from the transport sector and recommendations for testing that would work with their sectors, see Exhibit BK/M7/099 [INQ000527764]. Crucially DfT wanted to ensure that the cost of testing should not be borne by industry and that transport operators should not be penalised if they were unable to comply due to testing capacity constraints. The scheme was publicly announced by DHSC on 28 March 2021, Exhibit BK/M7/100 [INQ000049293].
99. Over the lifetime of the policy, 22 cohorts of workers over 7 Departments followed bespoke testing. During this time DfT engaged with DHSC to provide feedback from the transport industry and to seek changes that would make the testing scheme less challenging for the sector, in circumstances where this would not impact on safety.
100. DfT and industry wanted to ensure a consistent and proportionate approach across testing regimes, and that critical workers were not subject to more onerous requirements than passengers. Industry stakeholders raised various issues in implementation of testing. For example, the maritime sector experienced difficulty in accessing and reporting test results with many operators and seafarers based overseas. DfT officials worked closely with DHSC to resolve these operational issues, and in particular the need to exempt isolated aviation, maritime and international rail workers (i.e. Eurostar Drivers or marine pilots).
101. Some key concessions that DfT engaged with DHSC on were:
  - (a) Tests for most cohorts were downgraded from PCR testing to LFTs on Day 2 (5 and 8) although there was some variation across the scheme (offshore workers and some MoJ cohorts still took PCRs).
  - (b) An exemption from testing requirements for aviation, maritime and international rail workers who travelled into the country isolated from the public (by virtue of carrying no passengers or being in a separate part of the conveyance for the duration of their journey).

- (c) That the bespoke testing regimes continued to be reviewed as part of the three planned 'checkpoints' for measures relating to international travel as set out in the GTT report.
102. In February 2022 all Departments were asked to review and agree an updated approach to bespoke testing, which set out that the bespoke testing regimes should be retained until either (1) the requirement for passengers who did not qualify as eligible fully vaccinated arrivals to be tested at the border was removed, rendering the current bespoke regime void (with the provision that it could be stood up again in the future should the need arise) or that (2) the public funding for testing ended and therefore the bespoke regime would no longer be funded and viable, see Exhibit BK/M7/101 [INQ000527786].
103. As part of the 'Living with COVID-19' announcement in February 2022, Exhibit BK/M7/102 [INQ000527793], it was confirmed that the Universal Testing Offer ("UTO") would end on 31 March 2022 and therefore the second condition for removal of bespoke testing was met. DHSC led on the removal of bespoke testing for international travel for the 5 exempt cohorts. Following the ending of the requirement to test for Covid-19 on arrival into the UK, all bespoke testing regimes were removed by 31 March.

#### **Managed Quarantine Service**

104. The Managed Quarantine Service ("MQS") was a policy to manage passengers arriving from Red List countries through government procured hotels to prevent the risk of passengers from high-risk countries importing VOCs. DHSC developed and was responsible for the MQS policy including the procurement of hotel capacity, awarding contracts to operate MQS, cost controls and ensuring flexibility to cope with changes to the red list. Once Ministers had decided to implement the MQS, DfT worked closely with DHSC to operationalise the policy and to engage with industry, given the need to process red list passengers and to establish red list terminals (dedicated terminals for direct UK arrivals from red list countries). A minute from the Prime Minister on 4 February 2021, Exhibit BK/M7/103 [INQ000087160], sets out the departmental responsibilities for this work.
105. MQS was introduced on 15 February 2021 for countries assessed as high-risk to the UK for importation of a variant of concern. Only British and Irish citizens, or those with residence rights in the UK (including long-term visa holders), were permitted entry to the UK. Passengers arriving from Red List countries were required to book an MQS

package (which covered the costs of hotel and tests) before their arrival and quarantine at the facility for the full 10 days. TTR was not an option under MQS.

106. All countries were removed from the Red List on 15 December 2021 and remaining MQS hotel capacity was stood down in March 2022.
107. Travel bans prohibiting the arrival of direct flights from high-risk countries were first introduced in December 2020 in response to a rapid rise of cases of the Beta variant. Following the introduction of MQS in February 2021, direct flight bans were used by the DHSC in some instances as a demand management tool to support MQS operations and to enable MQS facilities to be developed. Any British or Irish nationals returning to the UK after being in a red list country needed to return via an indirect route during this direct flight ban.
108. On 2 April 2021, the Government announced a direct flight pilot for two Red List countries (Pakistan and Bangladesh but later extended to include India) on a trial basis to determine the usefulness of restriction of direct flights.
109. This was led by DfT and following the completion of the pilot, bans on direct flights from red list countries were lifted in June 2021, see Exhibits BK/M7/025 [INQ000527770] and BK/M7/104 [INQ000049290]. Dedicated 'Red-List terminals' were opened at Heathrow Airport (Terminal 4) and Birmingham Airport (South Terminal) for direct UK arrivals from red list countries and an obligation for operators to convey red list passengers only to dedicated terminals was introduced. This was funded by DHSC as part of the MQS budget but dedicated red list terminal contracts with Heathrow and Birmingham were terminated from 22 November 2021.
110. During the Omicron wave of Covid-19, a number of Southern African countries were added to the red list. Heathrow airport allowed the use of Terminal 4 for flights from red list countries without any public funding. All countries were removed from the red list on 11 December 2021 and passengers in MQS accommodation were released on 15 December 2021.

### **The Traffic Light System**

111. The TLS, which was recommended in the second GTT report, replaced the Travel Corridors system and aimed to balance the need to continue to contain Covid-19 with facilitating a safe return to international travel. It worked by categorising countries as Red, Amber, or Green, based on the risk they posed to public health. The TLS was

agreed at a meeting of the COVID-O Cabinet sub-committee on 29 April 2021, see Exhibit BK/M7/105 [INQ00049269].

112. Prior to when the TLS came into operation, there were provisions in legislation aimed at preventing international travel. Legislation that contained these provisions were referred to as 'Stay in the UK' regulations. The 'Stay in the UK' regulations, *The Health Protection (coronavirus, restrictions) (steps and local authority enforcement powers) (England) (amendment) Regulations 2021* were enacted following a COVID-S<sup>5</sup> meeting on 21 February 2021. They were repealed soon after the TLS was introduced in May 2021. As a result, travel outside the UK was no longer unlawful. However, the public was still advised not to travel to countries on the red and amber list for leisure based on the prevalence of Covid-19.
113. The JBC continued to produce country and territory risk assessments. Decisions on country categorisation and associated border measures were taken by Ministers, at COVID-O meetings, on a three-weekly basis, considering JBC risk assessments and wider public health factors. The TLS was implemented through *The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel and Operator Liability) (England) Regulations 2021*.
114. Another recommendation in the GTT report was the 'green watchlist'. The green watchlist added a sub-category for countries that were considered at risk of moving from the UK's green list to the amber list. On 24 June 2021 (as part of the first GTT checkpoint review) the SoS announced that a green 'watchlist' would be introduced. The watchlist was introduced on 30 June 2021.
115. The final GTT review was held in September 2021, Exhibit BK/M7/106 [INQ000049194]. It removed the TLS and replaced it with a single red list which was introduced from 4 October 2021, following discussion at COVID-O on 17 September 2021, see Exhibit BK/M7/107 [INQ000049195].
116. On 27 November 2021 additional travel restrictions were introduced in response to the Omicron variant. These included:
  - (a) the need for international arrivals to take a PCR test on day 2; and
  - (b) face coverings were made mandatory on public transport (as well as in shops).

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<sup>5</sup> The Covid-19 Strategy Committee ("Covid-S") was a forum for Ministerial decision-making on the Government's strategic response to COVID-19.

117. Restrictions were then tightened again from 7 December, when anyone aged 12 and above travelling to the UK was required to provide a negative pre-departure test (rapid lateral flow test or PCR) as close as possible to departure and not more than 2 days before, to slow the importation of the new variant, see Exhibit BK/M7/108 [INQ000527801].
118. Following a review of the Omicron restrictions, measures were eased throughout January 2022. From 7 January eligible fully vaccinated passengers were no longer required to take a pre-departure test before travelling to England or required to self-isolate on arrival. From January 9 LFTs could be used instead of PCR tests for fully vaccinated travellers on or before Day 2, and on 17 January the self-isolation period was reduced to five days following two negative LFT test results.
119. On 18 March 2022, all remaining border health measures were lifted and international travel regulations revoked, in line with the Prime Minister's 'Living with COVID-19' Strategy that was published on 21 February 2022.

#### **International Travel Guidance and Communications**

120. Throughout the Pandemic, international travel guidance for passengers was set out on the website GOV.UK, with guidance being updated following any announcement where policy changed. DfT was responsible for several GOV.UK public guidance pages on health measures for international travel, with links to separate DHSC, FCDO and Home Office-led guidance pages. For example, the Home Office-led Entering the UK page which contained summary information about Covid-19 policy and links to more detailed pages and DHSC-led Managed Quarantine System, self-isolation and testing pages.
121. DfT led on engagement with the transport industry throughout the Pandemic. The Department worked collaboratively with other Government Departments to ensure there was a joint narrative and consistency of message. DfT developed a toolkit and a range of assets that were issued widely to its external stakeholders to support them in cascading messages to staff and passengers, see Exhibit BK/M7/109 [INQ000049142]. The toolkit included assets for use on social media and digital platforms as well as posters, all of which were readily available on an external extranet site that stakeholders could use across their own channels. The toolkit was updated regularly to provide clear, up to date information as necessary.

122. During the Pandemic the SoS led the No10 daily press conference on several occasions to deliver transport-led announcements. Teams in DfT (a mix of policy and communications teams) led on drafting speeches and press notices for key announcements relating to travel, which were cleared centrally through No10. Where possible, the Government ran a regular rhythm of announcing and implementing changes to the travel system to provide consistency (such as the process of announcing Travel Corridor/TLS changes).
123. Once a decision was reached an announcement was made shortly after, usually through a press notice on GOV.UK or an Oral Ministerial Statement to Parliament by Ministers (dependent on the sitting of the House, or urgency of the change). This was often complemented by Ministers attending a media-round and Tweeting. DfT communications (working with policy officials) generally led on a cross-government agreed Q&A to support an HMG response to questions from journalists, industry, parliamentarians and the public.
124. DfT ensured that there were regular announcements to the press, parliament and industry on changes to the travel system that balanced the need to give adequate time for changes to be operationalised and understood whilst also keeping public health at the forefront of the policy. The guidance on travel to England was updated alongside each announcement notifying passengers of when measures would be coming into force, and again to state that measures had come into force.
125. DfT used behavioural science to optimise guidance and posters for key Covid-19 communication messages for passengers crossing UK borders. For example, between July to November 2020, DfT's Social and Behavioural Research and Aviation teams, Home Office, and Border Force collaborated on optimising messaging to passengers to increase compliance with PLF. The output was a Communications Partner Pack, Exhibit BK/M7/110 [INQ000049208], that provided international operators with key messages, updated visuals, new placements, and social media advice to increase passenger compliance.
126. I will now set out the additional areas of interest that were not reflected in the list of matters provided in the Inquiry's request. These are: PLF, Declaration to Travel Form, vaccine certification, cruise restart, exemptions process and international engagement.

## Passenger Locator Form

127. On 8 June 2020 DHSC legislation to support a 14-day self-isolation measure, Exhibit BK/M7/111 [INQ000049238], for people arriving from abroad to all four nations of the UK came into force. The Regulations included a requirement that everyone entering the UK should complete a PLF before entry and self-isolate for 14 days on arrival.
128. The PLF measure applied to all four nations and across all international transport modes - aviation, maritime, rail and roads (individuals driving abroad). The Home Office was responsible for drafting the form, however DfT and DHSC/UKHSA supported the Home Office in setting the policy for the form. As decisions to implement the PLF had significant operational impacts across transport modes, DfT sought to ensure that the form was suitable for transport operators and passengers to maximise compliance.
129. Throughout the lifespan of the PLF measure, DfT engaged across Government, particularly with the Home Office, on improvements to the form. As an initial priority, DfT requested, and secured, exemptions from completing the PLF for transport workers who were regularly crossing the border to ensure that transport services could continue to run efficiently, see Exhibit BK/M7/112 [INQ000049043].
130. Later, in response to feedback from transport operators, who cited the length and complexity of the form as a major issue for passengers, DfT suggested proposals to simplify the form. Simplification of the form was a constantly evolving process. Examples of changes made to the PLF, since it was first deployed in January 2020 were:
  - (a) Incorporating the ability to check that passengers have recorded a valid test booking and/or managed quarantine reference number;
  - (b) Including verification of a passenger's vaccination status;
  - (c) Improving the data quality and improved logic and mandatory fields to help ensure the passenger has submitted the required details before travel; and
  - (d) Linking the PLF to border systems and e-Gates ensured compliance checks with critical requirements were automated and in advance of the border.
131. From February 2021 until the PLF was withdrawn from 18 March 2022, private sector carriers were required to check that everyone travelling to the UK had submitted a

PLF in advance of travel under the International Travel and Operator Liability Regulations.

132. The requirement for carriers to undertake checks was underpinned by a compliance regime overseen by transport regulators MCA, CAA and ORR, and failure to comply resulted in fines starting at £2000 per passenger per offence.
133. The PLF was adapted in line with health measures as they evolved throughout the Pandemic. Changes came as a result of decisions taken at COVID-O meeting. Following the decision, the Home Office (Border Force), in consultation with DfT, FCDO, DHSC and the Devolved Administrations then agreed what changes would be made and then requested their digital colleagues make the change to the PLF.
134. The PLF was eventually a fully integrated part of the international travel system, serving to present the passenger with their pre-departure requirements and obtain compliance with them according to their status, which was also determined by the form based on vaccination status and travel history. In line with decisions at COVID-O, and supported by DfT, see Exhibits BK/M7/113 [INQ000049178] and BK/M7/114 [INQ000049176], remaining health measures including the PLF were removed on Friday 18 March 2022.
135. DfT led on drafting and implementing *the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel and Operator Liability) (England) Regulations 2021*. These required operators to ensure passengers were compliant with various requirements when they arrived in England. This involved developing the policy itself, drafting the regulations, agreeing the penalties (in consultation with other Government Departments) and then providing guidance to industry so they knew what they needed to do and where necessary refining the guidance in response to industry feedback (e.g., test reference numbers).
136. The Regulations were underpinned by an enforcement regime overseen by regulators (MCA, CAA and ORR). The Regulations placed (at different times) up to five regulatory requirements on carriers, with sanctions that applied upon a default. These were to ensure that every passenger that arrived in England:
  - (a) Was provided with specified Covid-related information (£4,000 per offence which is per passenger; £500 for failing to keep records of compliance or to provide such to the regulator when requested).



- (b) Carried proof of a negative PDT for those not eligible vaccinated (£2,000 per passenger).
- (c) Carried a completed PLF, and, if the passenger was claiming any job-related exemptions, that they were carrying suitable evidence (£2,000 per passenger).
- (d) Conveyed only to a designated port for managed quarantine, if the passenger was a red list passenger (£2,000 per passenger).
- (e) Carried the required evidence to prove that they were fully vaccinated, if they stated this on the PLF and it had not been validated within the form (£2,000 per passenger, £4,000 for failing to implement systems and £4,000 for failing to keep records).

### **Declaration to Travel Form**

- 137. On 27 January 2021, the Home Secretary announced heightened inbound and outbound border controls to protect public health following a COVID-O meeting that had taken place the previous day, see Exhibit BK/M7/115 [INQ000049240]. The outbound measures announced included a requirement to declare the reason for travel, which would be checked by carriers, supported by an increased police enforcement presence at ports and airports. The main policy intent for the outbound form was to continue to prohibit holidays and leisure travel abroad.
- 138. At a meeting of the COVID-O on 21 February 2021, it was agreed that the Government would introduce a 'Stay in the UK' provision into legislation to replace the 'Stay at Home' regulations as the mechanism to prohibit international travel. This formed part of the overall efforts to manage the risk of importing and exporting variants. This was also intended to create a legislative requirement for people who were travelling abroad to complete a travel form to outline their reason for travel.
- 139. The Declaration to Travel Form ("DTF") was announced as part of the "Road Map" on 22 February 2021, Exhibit BK/M7/116 [INQ000049241]. The Road Map stated that in England, travel abroad for holidays would still not be permitted and, from 8 March 2021, outbound travellers would be legally obliged to provide their reason for travel on the DTF. DfT led on the development of the DTF, in consultation with the Home Office and FCDO, see Exhibits BK/M7/117 [INQ000049124], BK/M7/118 [INQ000049125] and BK/M7/119 [INQ000049126].

140. Under the Passenger Information Regulations, carriers were obliged to provide information regarding the travel declaration form on their websites and in pre-departure communications sent to passengers. Carriers were also requested to check that passengers had a completed DTF. To ensure compliance, the Home Secretary proposed to implement an obligation on carriers to check the DTF on a mandatory basis with associated penalties for non-compliance. DfT provided advice to Ministers on 9 April 2021 recommending that there was no need to impose additional obligations on carriers (because they were already taking multiple steps to ensure compliance), as well as the difficulty of introducing and enforcing such obligations, see Exhibits BK/M7/120 [INQ000049135], BK/M7/121 [INQ000049136], BK/M7/122 [INQ000049137], BK/M7/123 [INQ000049138] and BK/M7/124 [INQ000049139].
141. At a meeting of the COVID-O sub-committee on the 7 May 2021, it was agreed that non-essential international travel would be permitted from the 17 May 2021. This would be achieved by removing the 'Stay in the UK' legal restriction and the requirement for an outbound DTF, see Exhibit BK/M7/125 [INQ000049268]. As explained the TLS (discussed above), allowing travel to certain countries based on the RAG-rated risk they posed to public health, came into operation on 17 May 2021.

### **Vaccine Certification**

142. From Summer 2021, DfT led the development, in collaboration with other Departments (DHSC, FCDO, Home Office and the Devolved Administrations), of the policy to reduce travel restrictions for eligible fully vaccinated arrivals. In particular, given that vaccine certification was a key mechanism for reopening travel, DfT led the phased roll-out of countries and territories from which vaccine certificates were accepted (starting with the UK, then EU and US, then other countries and territories on a phased basis) and the assessment of vaccine certificates to ensure they met agreed criteria and were assessed for fraud risks.
143. DHSC led the vaccine recognition policy, namely which vaccines (rather than certificates) were accepted at the border. By early 2022, at the point where restrictions were lifted, DfT had led a process to accept the vaccine certificates of over 180 countries and territories. This was conducted in collaboration with relevant Departments, and the policy was important to facilitate self-isolation-free travel safely, especially as it was at the core of the risk-based policy that replaced the traffic light system in the September 2021 GTT checkpoint review.

144. Further, it enabled the UK to demonstrate how the vaccine roll-out could be used to ease travel restrictions safely, whilst showing demonstrable progress for safe reopening at key international events such as the G7 Summit. In spring 2021, DfT, DHSC, FCDO and NHSX worked collaboratively and actively to demonstrate the capabilities of the NHS COVID Pass to international partners and learn from others' solutions, as well as to facilitate outbound travel for passengers travelling to countries and territories with reduced travel restrictions for eligible fully vaccinated arrivals.

### **Cruise Restart**

145. The cruise sector was at a standstill for over a year, following early onboard Covid-19 outbreaks that attracted significant media attention. The UK took a leading role on repatriating cruise crew and passengers, alongside working internationally to address issues preventing ship's crew changes. This included convening an international summit and issuing a joint statement with 14 nations committing to resolving the issues facing seafarers internationally, see Exhibit BK/M7/126 [INQ000527797]. This action was crucial to protect global supply chains, given the maritime sector moves over 80% of global trade.
146. Domestic cruises restarted in England on 20 May 2021 as part of a phased restart. In the second GTT Report, Government committed to restarting international cruises in line with the TLS, subject to ongoing satisfactory evidence from domestic restart, successful cruise operations elsewhere in the world and the signing of an industry-government Memorandum of Understanding covering the cost and liabilities of repatriation.
147. DfT led a Ministerial Task and Finish Group with FCDO, DHSC, UKHSA, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport ("DCMS") and Cabinet Office to ensure these conditions were met and agree recommendations for a safe international restart. As part of the second GTT checkpoint review, international cruises were permitted to and from England from 2 August 2021, subject to public health guidance and the wider travel regulations at the time.
148. DfT drove the work to safely restart the cruise sector, at both official and Ministerial level. DfT worked across Departments and governmental bodies to identify options for safe restart, bringing together evidence to demonstrate that industry protocols were safe and effective, and driving policy decisions. This work was important in enabling cruise operations to be brought in line with other modes of transport after over a year of suspended operations.

## Exemptions

149. Exemptions from border health measures for certain groups of workers were necessary to maintain critical national infrastructure and essential services, including the flow of goods to England. The Cabinet Office led the process to agree critical exemptions when the international travel regulations were first introduced in June 2020. The process was handed over to DfT to lead coordination of work-related exemptions from July 2020, but all Departments could propose new exemptions or the amendment or removal of existing exemptions for consideration by Ministers at COVID-O.
150. The DfT led process required departments to submit proposals for an exemption for a sector for which they were responsible, see Exhibits BK/M7/127 [INQ000049056] and BK/M7/128 [INQ000049057], and it was that department which was responsible for the implementation and compliance of the exemption, as well as for producing public guidance. The exemptions in place were reviewed monthly. In submitting a proposal for a new exemption, departments were required to work with Border Force, PHE and Devolved Administration colleagues to assess the public health risk and agree mitigations to those risks of the exemption.

## International Engagement

151. Throughout the Pandemic, countries took different approaches to border measures. At the outset New Zealand and Australia took a strict approach, with full border closures early on. European countries and the US had the least stringent responses to international travel during the early Pandemic, but by January 2021 had increased border measures following increasing VOCs.
152. The International Comparators Joint Unit ("ICJU")<sup>6</sup> assessed England's border measures in relation to international comparators, and this assessment changed throughout the Pandemic. For example, in March 2021 the ICJU assessed that England's measures were of 'medium stringency' in line with Canada and Israel, but stricter than the European average, with countries such as Germany, France as the US classed as 'lower stringency', see Exhibit BK/M7/129 [INQ000527771]. By September 2021, the assessment had changed to mark England's measures as 'lower stringency', in line with the US, France and Germany, see Exhibit BK/M7/130 [INQ000100573]. This was in line with the UK vaccine rollout, and policy to reduce

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<sup>6</sup> Established in April 2020 by the FCDO and Cabinet Office, the International Comparators Joint produced analysis on international responses to the Pandemic.

travel restrictions for eligible fully vaccinated arrivals, as well as considering data relating to VOCs, and levels of hospitalisation.

153. DfT officials also monitored the measures being implemented internationally and provided updates to Ministers, particularly when countries were easing measures, so that Ministers could raise at COVID-O as needed. Exhibits BK/M7/131 [INQ000527798] and BK/M7/132 [INQ000527780] provide examples of how information on international comparators was used in briefings provided to Ministers, see Exhibit BK/M7/133 [INQ000528091]. DfT also received real time updates from the International Air Traffic Association ("IATA") when a country changed a border measure, which informed a log of key international comparators.
154. Throughout the Pandemic DfT engaged with other countries' governments through multilateral fora such as the G7 and the International Civil Aviation Organisation ("ICAO"). DfT also held bilateral engagement with priority countries including Australia and Singapore. This engagement focussed on boosting the recovery of international travel by reducing confusion on travel measures, both for passengers and industry.
155. A key forum of regular bilateral engagement was the UK-US Experts Working Group ("UK-US EWG"), which provided a valuable and candid forum to support, influence and inform decisions to reopen transatlantic travel especially for fully vaccinated passengers. It also acted as a forum for DfT to understand differences in vaccine certification across US states and how US border measures such as sample testing worked at US ports.
156. In relation to vaccine certification, our bilateral engagement was particularly intensive in spring and summer 2021, as DfT was advocating for the acceptance of the NHS Covid Pass for outbound travel. DfT was also sharing with partners the Department's insight into the GTT's findings in April 2021.

#### **Working with other Government Departments**

157. Overall, DfT worked effectively with other Government Departments on both decision making and policy implementation. Any challenges set out below must be considered in the context of an unprecedented situation and requirement to deliver at pace and under sustained pressure for a period of two years.

### **Access to key information and meetings**

158. DfT worked collaboratively with the centre and other Government Departments on decisions relating to international travel policy. This collaboration ensured appropriate input into critical decision-making. In many cases the SoS led policy development and the drafting of papers for COVID-O. DfT worked well with Cabinet Office on this area, with regular information flows, including early steers from No 10. Officials developed mechanisms for collaboration outside of office hours, required by the fast-paced nature of the response.
159. Given this fast pace, DfT Ministers and officials did not always receive COVID-O papers in advance of meetings, and papers were sometimes only provided in the room, with negative implications for the quality of decision-making. For example, I raised concerns with the Cabinet Secretary over the decision-making process in relation to international travel and the TLS, see Exhibit BK/M7/134 [INQ000049154].

### **Working with DHSC**

160. DHSC was the lead Department for testing and health measures. DfT supported this work through engagement with the travel industry to explain the measures and gather any operational feedback. DfT also regularly provided feedback to DHSC and UKHSA on testing measures, to ensure they worked operationally for industry, but also discussing improvements to make the GOV.UK private testing provider portal work better for passengers (more detail provided at point 165 below).
161. At paragraph 251 (c) of my statement for Module 2, Exhibit BK/M7/135 [INQ000191302], I said that “DfT had good relationships with DHSC and UKHSA, but there were challenges around a lack of shared access to data, balancing policy aims, testing requirements for under 18s, and pre-departure testing”. It may be helpful if I set out some more detail in respect of this issue.

### **Balancing policy aims**

162. The need to balance the objective of protecting public health while also reopening safe international travel was important to mitigate the economic, social and wider impacts of travel restrictions including on freight and the supply of critical goods. Whilst DHSC and DfT worked closely together in order to ensure restrictive measures were proportionate to risk and operable in practice, some tensions inevitably arose.

163. One of the challenges between these policy aims was that DHSC would push for strict measures for the transport industry, without full understanding of how transport operations worked on the ground - noting that maritime, aviation and rail operators already worked in highly regulated sectors in terms of health and safety and had put in place their own extensive testing and workplace practices to detect and prevent transmission. Due to this, DfT sometimes considered that measures were disproportionate to the risk. The bespoke testing scheme, as set out in point 96, provides an example of this.
164. This was particularly true of workers that travelled into the country but were isolated from the public, for instance transport operators carrying no passengers or where staff were located in a separate part of the conveyance for the duration of the journey. Operators expressed their concerns to DfT that testing requirements on those isolated workers threatened to deter critical freight and transport services (including vaccines and medical supplies). This is an issue DfT raised with DHSC, with the Transport SoS writing to the DHSC SoS to set out these concerns, see Exhibit BK/M7/136 [INQ000527769]. Eventually DfT managed to obtain an exemption for isolated workers in May 2021.

#### **Feedback on Testing Providers**

165. As set out above, DfT also wanted to ensure that the travel system worked for passengers and a key area of feedback was on the GOV.UK list of testing providers for international travel. This portal listed PCR testing packages available to purchase and was owned and run by DHSC. The list was searchable by alphabetical listing, by price and by the type and location of preferred service. For example, a post-arrival PCR test could be posted to the consumer's home to be self-administered and then sent to a lab, or a test could be administered at a specific site.
166. From Spring 2021, given the issues with the GOV.UK testing portal, DfT officials mystery-shopped the portal on a regular basis to check the prices and links were accurate and were actually available at that price on the provider's website. DfT officials relayed ways the portal could be improved to DHSC so that people could book tests with ease and improve the passenger experience. DfT Ministers took a strong interest in improving the GOV.UK portal, and this was raised at both a Ministerial, Exhibit BK/M7/137 [INQ000527772], and Permanent Secretary level, Exhibit BK/M7/138 [INQ000527782], with DHSC. In August 2021, the Health Secretary requested a review of the market for PCR travel tests by the Competition and Markets Authority ("CMA"). In response, the CMA provided a report in September

2021 setting out key recommendations to improve the market for consumers, see Exhibit BK/M7/139 [INQ000527809].

167. Areas of interest for DfT included ensuring that the price listed on GOV.UK was accurate and available, that tests were as affordable as possible for consumers, and tackling poor performance of private providers to boost consumer confidence. We also sought to combat misleading marketing practices such as changing the company name to appear higher in the GOV.UK list, using DHSC logos and phrases like 'Government approved' or selling the exact same type of test at different prices for different vaccination groups so that the lowest price would be cited on the portal.

**Lack of shared access to data**

168. When asked to take decisions on making changes to the system (e.g. the GTT checkpoints) Ministers were given the latest evidence on the efficacy of measures and the risks and implications of measures. Regular data dashboards on border measures were maintained by the Cabinet Office and shared across key Departments, tracking key data on areas such as travel volumes, compliance, testing, variants and other areas. In particular, DfT found Variant Insights Reports provided by Cabinet Office useful, and an important source of information, should testing be stood up again. An example of this report is Exhibit BK/M7/140 [INQ000528090].
169. It would have also been valuable for DfT to have received regular data on test positivity and variants. DfT received regular MQS data on what was happening domestically, but this data never reached a stage where broader private testing data from international arrivals was collected and shared on a regular basis across government by DHSC. An email to DHSC set out the data that the Department would have found helpful to receive regularly, see Exhibit BK/M7/141 [INQ000527791].
170. Another issue linked to data was a lack of PCR sequencing capacity in laboratories, meaning that genomic sequencing of tests (to identify VOCs), outside of MQS tests, was very low. This issue was reflected to DHSC when considering improvements in future testing, see Exhibit BK/M7/141 [INQ000527791]. The travel industry challenged DfT on why expensive PCR tests were necessary, given only a low number of results were being sequenced. If future testing was stood up again, DfT would wish to ensure sufficient sequencing capacity at laboratories and obligations to sequence positive results quickly, in addition to publicly available sequencing data and targets to articulate the benefits of PCR tests and sequencing.



### Testing for Under 18s

171. The testing and health measures that applied to under 18s varied over time according to the traffic light system and age of the person. There were also slight differences across some of the Devolved Administrations, as well as differences in approaches internationally. These differences resulted in some confusion on the measures that applied for under 18s.
172. DfT engaged with DHSC and UKHSA to ensure the measures were reviewed regularly, with the aim of simplifying testing and isolation measures for under 18s. As under 18s became eligible for vaccines from Summer 2021, DfT also engaged with NHSX<sup>7</sup> and DHSC to understand and communicate how under 18s could access their vaccine certification.

### DOMESTIC TESTING

173. I will now outline the role DfT played in supporting DHSC in domestic testing initiatives. Policy was developed by Cabinet Office and DHSC, whilst DfT worked on prioritising and operationalising these policies so that they could support transport workers and enable the transport system to continue operating, which was crucial for maintaining other essential services.
174. DfT wanted to ensure that transport workers (as key workers) could continue to work as the transport sector is highly reliant on the physical presence of employees, with a significant number of roles being impossible to do from home.

### Workplace Surveillance

175. During the first wave of Covid-19 DfT's Transport Security Operations Centre ("TSOC") monitored workforce absence levels as part of their wider sitreps, see Exhibit BK/M7/142 [INQ000527732]. In addition, operators, DfT ALBs, agencies and non-departmental public bodies ("NDPBs") put into place workforce availability, absence recording, and mitigation plans. This was to keep the transport network operational during peaks of absence caused by workers being away from work with Covid-19. By March 2020, it became clear that additional measures would need to be put in place to protect key workers.

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<sup>7</sup> NHSX was the HMG Unit established in 2019 to set national policy and develop best practice for NHS technology, digital and data.

176. From May 2020, the responsibility for key worker testing within DfT moved from TSOC to the newly created Covid-19 Directorate, which continued to engage with DHSC.
177. When the wider Covid-19 Directorate was established in DfT in May 2020, a dedicated workforce team was established. From October 2020, a decision was made within DfT's Covid-19 Directorate to begin formally tracking the prevalence of Covid-19 within the various domestic (i.e., Rail, Road, Maritime, Local Transport) transport teams and with the operators, see Exhibit BK/M7/143 [INQ00049267]. This was due to increasing anecdotal evidence of staff absence increasing.
178. On a fortnightly basis the team collected returns from; domestic rail operators, local buses, national bus providers, freight, international rail and Transport for London ("TfL"). This data provided the Department with workforce absence rates across the transport network, split by reasons for absence, which included positive test results, symptoms, and other illnesses. The data was shared with central analytics to form part of the analytical dashboards to go to Ministers. The data was also used to shape policy thinking on testing to ensure there was a coordinated approach across the modal teams.
179. From that point on the Covid-19 Directorate focused on central policy and strategy, while modal teams owned the relationship with participating organisations. Modal relationship managers, with DHSC's support, guided organisations up until the point they had accepted terms and conditions and submitted orders, after which all work was led by DHSC and participating organisations.

#### **Testing Prioritisation (including testing shortages)**

180. On 2 April 2020 the Secretary of State for DHSC set out a plan to carry out 100,000 Covid-19 tests a day for key workers by the end of April, see Exhibit BK/M7/144 [INQ000049228]. This followed a General Public Sector Implementation Group ("GPSIG") on the 30 March 2020, where all Departments were asked to develop a ranking of priority workers for testing to be shared at an upcoming Healthcare Ministerial Implementation Group ("HMIG"), Exhibit BK/M7/145 [INQ000527725]. DfT's return provided updates from relevant transport modes (aviation, maritime, rail and roads) and highlighted what they required in terms of staffing to provide the minimal level of service, see Exhibit BK/M7/146 [INQ000091338].
181. At the HMIG on the 9 April 2020, the Group agreed a prioritised definition of key worker groups, which were divided into four tiers based on the rationale set out by

DHSC, see Exhibit BK/M7/147 [INQ000251196]. Most transport workers requiring tests fell into tier 4, however the British Transport Police and MCA staff fell within tiers 2 and 3. DHSC's aim was to start rolling out tests to categories 2 and 3 within the two weeks following the meeting, with the remainder of key workers in tier 4 to follow within a four-week window. Following the proposal, DfT engaged with DHSC to make the case for transport key workers to be able to access these tests earlier, to which DHSC agreed, see Exhibits BK/M7/148 [INQ000049217], BK/M7/149 [INQ000049218], BK/M7/150 [INQ000049219], BK/M7/151 [INQ000049220], BK/M7/152 [INQ000049221] and BK/M7/153 [INQ000049222].

182. DHSC shared an opportunity with DfT where transport key workers could participate in a pilot testing programme between 17 – 19 April 2020. The programme was based at twelve of DHSC's regional testing centres. To receive a test, workers needed to complete an online registration form and then received an appointment time for a test. Given the tight window for testing, it was agreed that TfL and Network Rail were best placed to take advantage of these pilot tests. They operated and supported key transport services and had workforce data to identify key workers and their families requiring testing. DfT worked with the transport operators and DHSC to implement this pilot, see Exhibit BK/M7/154 [INQ000049033].
183. On the 23 April 2020 DHSC announced the roll out of testing for all essential workers including transport workers, Exhibit BK/M7/155 [INQ000497452]. Following the announcement SoS wrote to over 130 stakeholders across the modes informing them of this change and signposting the creation of a new online portal that had been launched for key workers to book themselves into regional centres for tests, see Exhibit BK/M7/156 [INQ000527728].
184. On 5 October 2020 (Exhibit BK/M7/157 [INQ000049082]), and then again on 19 November 2020 (Exhibit BK/M7/158 [INQ000049092]), the Department advised DfT Ministers about potential shortages in testing supplies. Testing shortages in September led to transport operators losing critical staff to self-isolation. While testing capacity had increased substantially, transport workers needed sufficient access to testing throughout the next few months to maintain transport network capacity. The Department therefore pressed DHSC to include transport workers on the key priority worker portal for ordering tests.

## Mass Testing Sites

185. On 3 December 2020, the Transport SoS announced that lateral flow tests (“LFTs”) would be available at six sites for transport workers, as part of a national pilot scheme, Exhibit BK/M7/159 [INQ000049229].
186. DfT reached out to relevant employers to suggest possible locations for pilot sites for mass testing of transport workers, see Exhibit BK/M7/160 [INQ000528085]. The initial response recommended 87 sites, but more were added as the pilot progressed. The proposal was presented at Domestic Transport Programme Board on 16 December 2020 setting out the work with DHSC, Exhibit BK/M7/161 [INQ000527789].
187. The mass testing pilots used LFTs, because they offered quick results as they could be self-administered (under the supervision offered by a trained professional or volunteer) and do not require a laboratory. The drawback though was that LFTs were less sensitive than PCR tests so carried a risk of false positive results. Employees who tested positive would then have had to have a confirmatory PCR test.
188. Three of these initiatives were operational early at sites established at King’s Cross and Pier Walk, North Greenwich. There was also a site set up at Manchester Airport offering LFTs to the public including transport workers, see Exhibit BK/M7/162 [INQ00049115].
189. DfT also worked with other organisations to support transport worker testing. For example, from January 2021 DfT engaged with Kent County Council to set up mass test sites in Dover and Eurotunnel. The sites were used to test those workers who were critical to maintaining transport flows, both at the locations themselves, and on critical transport services (e.g. ferry workers). In additional, all site workers including transport workers, were tested at Sevington and Manston Inland Border Facilities, see Exhibit BK/M7/163 [INQ000527750]
190. Alongside this, on 3 December 2020 (Exhibit BK/M7/164 [INQ000049106]) and 15 December 2020 (Exhibits BK/M7/162 [INQ000049115], BK/M7/165 [INQ000049116] and BK/M7/166 [INQ000049117]), DfT Ministers were informed that DHSC was working with the Department and other Government Departments to implement testing pilots utilising LFTs as part of a wider mass testing initiative.
191. The first mass testing pilot was held in Liverpool from 6 November - 9 December 2020. It was a new whole city testing approach where all residents and workers (c. 500,000 people) were offered repeat Covid-19 testing, even if asymptomatic. A combination of existing swab tests, and half a million LFTs were used. LFTs provided

results within an hour without the need for a full-scale laboratory. The pilot was used to help to inform a blueprint for how fast and reliable mass testing for Covid-19 could be delivered at scale, see Exhibit BK/M7/167 [INQ000527745].

192. DfT engaged with DHSC on testing capacity and were reassured that they intended to protect the existing prioritisation of testing for key workers. Minister Heaton-Harris asked that the trials were monitored to see how it affected levels of transport worker absence, see Exhibit BK/M7/168 [INQ000527747]. Engagement with key operators highlighted their initial concerns about the impact of the additional testing, for example Stagecoach and Northern flagged that they were considering reducing the frequency of some services to protect schools and the availability of drivers, see Exhibit BK/M7/169 [INQ000527746].
193. DfT did explore potential contingency plans to prioritise and secure testing for operators in case there was a shortage, see Exhibit BK/M7/167 [INQ000527745]. This included DHSC holding a stockpile of tests for transport workers, making rapid tests available to transport workers, and DfT advising operators to put in place backup private testing regimes. DHSC were involved in all these discussions. The contingency plans were not required in the end, with major bus operators noting that larger numbers of staff returned to work rather than going absent due to the testing programme, see Exhibit BK/M7/170 [INQ000527748].

#### **Mobile Testing Units**

194. Alongside ensuring transport workers were able to receive testing supplies, the Department also led on responding to outbreaks among transport operators. For example, on the 16 December 2020, Great Western Railway ("GWR") had a large-scale outbreak across their organisation, Exhibit BK/M7/171 [INQ000049118]. The Department worked with DHSC officials to ensure that a mobile testing unit could be sent to GWR's area as a matter of priority, this was to ensure that the Christmas window for travel was not impacted due to an outbreak in a key depot.

#### **Daily Contact Testing**

195. In January 2021 the Department worked on the roll-out to three transport operators (Network Rail, TfL, and Heathrow) of pilots to utilise Daily Contact Testing ("DCT"). This was to allow workers to test for seven days, and if they remained negative, they could continue working, see Exhibit BK/M7/172 [INQ000049230]. Although this initiative was developed and implemented by the DHSC, the DfT led on

selecting the locations for the DCT pilot.

196. Daily contact testing was more attractive to transport operators as it enabled staff currently isolating because of coming into contact with an individual who had tested positive, to continue working if they tested negative. Initial stakeholder engagement suggested that all taxi employees should go through community testing, and bus companies were likely to prefer workplace testing. The stakeholder engagement efforts therefore focused on highlighting the benefits of workplace testing.
197. The Covid-19 Directorate worked closely with domestic transport policy teams to identify key sites of priority in which to establish DCT. There was a limit on the number of sites which could have DCT and Departments were asked by DHSC to strictly prioritise the sites that were put forward. This list, Exhibits BK/M7/173 [INQ000049156], BK/M7/174 [INQ000049157] and BK/M7/175 [INQ000049158], was provided to DHSC and subsequently each organisation that showed an interest was given access to the portal to log testing results and to join the scheme. Following the initial pilots, workplace DCT was extended to a total of 2,000 sites announced on 27 July 2021, see Exhibit BK/M7/176 [INQ000049231].

### **Asymptomatic Testing**

198. On 10 January 2021 DHSC announced that asymptomatic testing was to be rolled out across the country starting that week, Exhibit BK/M7/177 [INQ0000497850]. Following this announcement at COVID-O on 1 February 2021, it was agreed that every Government Department would be expected to establish a programme of 'test to find' or asymptomatic testing in the workplace for their own workforce and workforces of their agencies who could not work from home, as well as supporting rollout for sectors under their remit, see Exhibits BK/M7/178 [INQ000063328] and BK/M7/179 [INQ000054556].
199. DHSC's aim was to reduce transmission through identification of asymptomatic cases. This would support DfT in maintaining service levels by reducing long-term staff absences and outbreaks and increasing the safety of transport services. DfT engaged with DHSC to ensure that targets set were appropriate for transport operators, for example over 80% of licensed taxi/PHV drivers were self-employed at the time and some operators (e.g. scheduled coaches) had suspended services until March 2021, see Exhibit BK/M7/180 [INQ0000527763].
200. DfT engaged with approximately 52 transport operators and industry associations through roundtables, and by end of January 2021 9 organisations had confirmed that

they wanted to work with NHS T&T to roll out mass testing in their organisations, see Exhibit BK/M7/181 [INQ000527759]. The key priority for DfT was facilitating the procurement process of services and materials for organisations participating in the pilots.

### **End of Testing**

201. Following the rollout of the vaccination scheme and announced relaxation of self-isolation rules on 16th August 2021, Exhibit BK/M7/182 [INQ000049232], the reliance on testing and daily contact testing began to reduce, although bespoke testing continued.
202. DfT had no direct involvement in this work beyond informing modal colleagues and working with DHSC to ensure any concerns were answered. In January 2022 DHSC introduced the critical workers precautionary testing scheme in response to rising absence rates, see Exhibit BK/M7/183 [INQ000527796]. This provided a very limited number of tests to workers in roles assessed to be critical including some transport workers. DfT worked with industry providers to prioritise key transport roles and locations given the limited nature of the scheme.

### **Working with DHSC**

203. DfT successfully engaged with DHSC to ensure that testing policies were achievable and ensured that the key transport infrastructure could continue to run. For example, July 2021 witnessed the 'pingdemic' phenomenon, where those being notified of coming into close contact with someone who had tested positive for Covid (and who were therefore asked to isolate) had significantly increased. Transport operators indicated to the Department there was a major risk to the resilience of the transport network, see Exhibit BK/M7/184 [INQ000527776], with an increasing number of localised service cancellations or "near misses" on rail and at ports due to staff absence levels, see Exhibit BK/M7/185 [INQ000527774]. In a note to SoS on 15 July from Sir Peter Hendy, which outlined the ongoing effects of track and trace on transport staff absence, he highlighted that on 9 June Network Rail raised an issue in Manchester's signalling centre that had the potential to close part or whole sections of North-West rail operations. The situation was serious as 8 signallers were required to operate the centre in a 24-hour shift pattern. As they only had 8 remaining signallers to operate the centre, losing one more signaller would have caused Manchester Piccadilly station to close, see Exhibit BK/M7/186 [INQ000527775].
204. In response to these critical absences, DHSC agreed to work with DfT and other Government Departments, on a workable solution, see Exhibit BK/M7/187

[INQ000527778], which resulted in the introduction of an Exemptions Scheme for fully vaccinated key workers. Under the scheme a limited number of workers in critical roles, who had been identified as contacts of a positive case, were permitted to continue to attend work if they were double vaccinated. Following agreement at COVID-O on 19 July (Exhibit BK/M7/188 [INQ000065404]), the scheme was announced to the public, see Exhibit BK/M7/189 [000527806]. Departments were asked to set out which sector/roles met the threshold of the scheme. Then a named official of at least SCS2 level was required to decide on exemptions on a case-by-case basis. Departments were provided with a draft letter for individual cases, which were approved, see Exhibit BK/M7/190 [INQ000049155]. Departments also had to provide regular exemption reports to DHSC setting out the sector and workplace affected, and an assessment of the impact if an exception wasn't agreed, see Exhibit BK/M7/191 [INQ000527808].

205. DfT stood up this scheme quickly and from the 20 July, exemptions were issued to 29 different transport organisations under the Scheme. This totalled to 82 individual employees across domestic and international rail, roads, local transport, lifeline ferries, aviation, maritime ports, TfL and RAC. Operators reported that this had in some cases enabled them to avoid having to close transport operations. The Exemptions Scheme ended on 16 August when exemptions for all fully vaccinated contacts came into force, see Exhibit BK/M7/192 [INQ000527781].
206. I will now set out the additional areas of interest that were not reflected in the list of matters provided in the Inquiry's request. These are: testing initiatives undertaken by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency ("DVSA") and Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency ("DVLA"), Executive Agencies of the Department.

#### **DVLA: Mass Testing Pilot Site**

207. During the Pandemic, the DVLA invested in making its estate Covid-secure, working closely with Public Health Wales ("PHW"), Swansea Council's Environmental Health team and the trade union, see Exhibit BK/M7/193 [INQ000528092]. Whilst strict controls were in place, during December 2020 62 Covid cases were reported from the DVLA Contact Centre in Swansea. PHW declared this an outbreak on 21 December 2020, see Exhibit BK/M7/194 [INQ000527751].
208. DVLA took part in a mass testing pilot at the Contact Centre, with testing offered to all staff from 8th January to 31 March 2021. The aim was to help reduce transmission, prevent outbreaks and improve staff resilience, whilst mitigating against any risks of



delays to processing licencing requests, see Exhibit BK/M7/164 [INQ000049106]. LFT testing was then extended to all staff from 1 April until 9 June 2021.

#### **DVSA: Testing for driving test examiners and the resumption of driving tests**

209. Covid-19 restrictions meant that that practical car driving tests were either suspended, or taking place at a reduced number, during the Pandemic. In line with Step 4 of the road map for exiting lockdown on 19 July 2021, practical car driving tests resumed to a full programme of seven tests per examiner, per day, from 14 June 2021.
210. As driving test candidates and examiners sit within the enclosed environment of a vehicle and are not able to socially distance; Covid-19 testing was key to managing the associated risks and keeping a track on the spread of Covid-19 as driving tests resumed. Whilst testing was DHSC led, DfT worked closely with DHSC and the Devolved Administrations to secure tests at key worksites for Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency staff. Alongside this, DfT led on engagement with the Scottish Government, presenting a paper at their Scottish Testing Programme Board to secure tests for sites in Scotland which was then approved by Scottish Ministers. The Department also led on key engagement with the Welsh Administration to ensure tests were available.

#### **EQUALITIES AND VULNERABILITIES CONSIDERATIONS**

211. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, a Public Sector Equality Duty ("PSED") analysis was carried out in relation to policies being led by the Department. I exhibit to this statement some key examples of PSED analysis undertaken for PDT, Exhibit BK/M7/195 [INQ000527758], TTR (PSED analysis led by DHSC), Exhibit BK/M7/073 [INQ000049099] and the GTT, Exhibit BK/M7/196 [INQ000527767].
212. DfT's role in TTI policy primarily related to facilitating international travel or supporting the transport sector to continue to operate key services. As such there was a limited impact outside those wishing to travel internationally or working within the travel sector. Due to this limited impact, there was no impact in these policy areas on housing and homelessness, victims of domestic violence or for those in prisons or places of detention.
213. I will provide below information on some key areas identified in the analysis:

### **Lower Income Individuals**

214. Requiring people to pay for testing or MQS was identified as disadvantaging lower income individuals, especially minority ethnic groups, disabled people, women and younger people. However, given that travel is predominantly a choice rather than a requirement, the measures were still considered a proportionate response to the risk posed by VOCs.

### **Nationality**

215. One key area identified in the assessments exhibited above was the possibility of indirect discrimination based on grounds of nationality, given international travel restrictions have a disproportionate impact on nationals of non-exempt countries and territories. Indirect discrimination is not unlawful if it is a proportionate means of meeting a legitimate aim. As the proposed changes to international travel were based on public health rationale and pursued the legitimate aim of preventing a danger to public health from imported cases of Covid-19, these measures were considered proportionate.

### **Older People**

216. One of the risks identified in analysis of the gradual easing of restrictions, was a risk that transmission rates of Covid-19 would increase. The PSED for GTT identified that 'As older people are most at risk of serious illness and death from COVID-19, it is likely that this will have a disproportionate negative impact on this group in relation to age. However, the Government has prioritised the vaccination of older people and with over 22 million people across the UK having received their dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, with all those within cohorts 1-4 having been offered a vaccine. Uptake rates to date have far exceeded programme assumptions and expectations such as over 90% of 70+ year olds having received their first dose of the vaccinations, and over 88% of those who are clinically vulnerable having received their first dose. This mitigates potential negative impacts as a consequence of loosening restrictions.

### **Race**

217. Similarly, these PSED analyses identified that there 'may be a disproportionate negative impact on ethnic minorities should the transmission rate increase. This policy, however, has a largely positive impact on mental health and wellbeing in relation to all protected characteristics, including race. We consider any disproportionate impacts are justified on account of the continued rollout of the vaccine and the commitment to keep the epidemiological data and the speed of

reopening under review in order to control transmission and protect the health of individuals.

218. The analyses still notes that, despite this, the Government was conscious that certain ethnic groups were more sceptical of the vaccine on account of the perpetuation of misinformation and sought to 'mitigate this by ensuring that there are increased communications, so people are reassured that the vaccine is safe and does not contravene religious rules. The government have funded over £23 million which has been allocated to 60 councils and voluntary groups across England to expand work to support those most at risk from COVID-19 and boost vaccine take up. This is part of over £7.9 billion government funding provided to councils to help support their communities during the Pandemic. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation ("JCVI") has urged some groups who are at higher risk of needing hospital treatment from Covid to take up the offer of vaccination promptly, including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic ("BAME") communities.

### **Domestic Testing**

219. As set out earlier in this statement, DfT did not lead on domestic test and trace policies and largely supported DHSC in understanding and mitigating impacts on the transport sector. DHSC would therefore be best placed to share equalities impact assessments for specific test and trace policies.
220. While not directly related to test, trace and isolate, DfT did consider disproportionately impacted groups throughout its domestic response to the Pandemic. As examples, DfT identified taxi and public hire vehicle drivers as a disproportionately impacted group, due to their close proximity to passengers, and provided guidance to enable them to mitigate risks when operating services. DfT also ensured that the safer transport guidance, for both transport operators and passengers, considered the needs of vulnerable groups. I would be happy to provide the Inquiry with further information on this work as part of this Module, or in future Modules.

## **LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE**

### **Effectiveness of Policies**

221. As set out throughout this statement, DfT's objectives in international travel measures were to protect public health, while also allowing a safe return to international travel.

This was important to mitigate the social and economic impacts of travel restrictions including on freight and the supply of critical goods.

222. CAA data suggests that the measures set out in this statement did enable some phased return to travel. For example, in 2021 between Q1 and Q2, following the introduction of the TLS both passenger and flight numbers increased, see Exhibit BK/M7/197 [INQ000527802]. However, numbers were still substantially down on pre-Pandemic levels.
223. There are areas where the Department could improve in the future, and I provide more information below on lessons learned from the Pandemic response.

### **Lessons Learned**

224. The Inquiry has requested information any internal or external lessons learned exercises or reviews relevant to matters outlined in the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 7, that the Department has commissioned and/or taken part in.
225. DfT has been involved in several external lessons learned exercises. Those most relevant for the Scope of Module 7 are:
- (a) June 2020 – Transport Select Committee – The impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on the aviation sector.
  - (b) March 2021 – Transport Select Committee – The impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on the aviation sector: interim report.
  - (c) April 2022 – Transport Select Committee – UK aviation: reform for take-off.
  - (d) April 2022 – National Audit Office – Managing cross-border travel during the COVID-19 Pandemic.
  - (e) July 2022 - Public Accounts Committee – Managing cross-border travel during the COVID-19 Pandemic.
226. The lessons learned exercises identified the following areas as working well:
- (a) Early industry engagement with key stakeholders to ensure operational concerns were worked through, and sessions with industry around announcements to ensure they were clear on the rules and any queries could be addressed early. When testing became available at airports, it was also helpful to engage with airport operators on testing availability at airports.

- (b) Regular updates to operator guidance as soon as policies changed.
  - (c) Regular updates to guidance pages on GOV.UK and use of feedback from users to ensure information that users sought was on the pages.
  - (d) DfT chaired governance boards like the International Travel Programme Board and Devolved Administration Strategy Board met frequently and were useful forums for sharing the latest information on risks as well as views from Departments and their sectors.
  - (e) The Department's statistics and data teams, working with the central crisis response team, transformed the data and insight available to decision makers across government and the public in a matter of days. This was brought about by a range of innovative approaches, including use of new partnerships across the transport sector, new methods and technology, and novel re-use of existing information previously reported quarterly. The consequence of this was providing real-time data to GOV.UK, 10 Downing Street, and Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies ("SAGE"), to inform decision makers and the public during the Pandemic.
  - (f) The DfT Advanced Analytics Division developed a COVID-19 Arrivals Policy Testing Simulation ("CAPTS") to model the potential protective effect of different policy options on minimising the risk of importing infections from international travel. While not a scientific forecast, this modelling allowed decision makers to understand the relative effectiveness of different policies in stopping infected individuals from entering the community where they would pose the risk of onward infection. The underlying infectious disease modelling came from PHE/UKHSA. The assumptions and inputs were discussed and agreed at a cross-Government working group.
227. In the lessons learned exercises the Department identified the following areas where improvements could be made for the future.
- (a) DfT accepts that the link between the data collected and an overall assessment of the success of measures could have been more clearly formalised. While DfT statistics and data teams shared detailed real-time data and analysis across government, some data and evidence could be improved in future if any border health measures need to be stood up again (as set out above in point 168). For example, DfT and Border Force provided regular data across government on

passenger volumes and forward estimates, but we struggled with accessing regular non-red list testing data from DHSC.

- (b) Should testing need to be stood up in the future, DfT would press for all Departments to have access to regular data on passenger volumes; the number of tests booked and taken; test positivity by vaccine status, genomic sequencing and which variants had been identified.
  - (c) There were times during the Pandemic where, in response to humanitarian crises, HMG introduced a reasonable excuse not to comply with measures like PDT. While this was operationalised quickly on all occasions, this required a cross-government clearance process, and in future this could be streamlined so that, in cases of a clear crisis where UK nationals are advised to immediately leave the country, there would be an automatic reasonable excuse not to comply with border health measures.
228. In addition to the formal lessons learned reports that I have referred to above, DfT has also conducted several exercises of a more informal nature in response to particular events or policy changes.
229. The International Travel Team produced a document summarising difficulties and challenges across several key areas in October 2022, see Exhibit BK/M7/198 [INQ000049204]. This was developed following DfT's evidence to the Public Accounts Committee's inquiry into managing cross border travel during the Pandemic (set out above).
230. The key areas identified were as follows:
- (a) Working with the Devolved Administrations. DfT engaged well with Devolved Administration officials, however, as mentioned earlier in this statement, there was sometimes minor divergence on policy decisions (as I mentioned, for example, Scotland had a different age threshold for tests for international arrivals).
  - (b) Working with JBC and UKHSA. DfT had good relationships with JBC colleagues, but there were challenges around transparency of JBC/UKHSA risk assessment data, the drafting of joint COVID-O papers, and contingency planning.
  - (c) Testing regimes. DfT had good relationships with DHSC and UKHSA, but there were challenges around a lack of shared access to data, balancing policy aims,

testing requirements for under 18s, and pre-departure testing (outlined throughout this statement).

(d) Exemptions regime. DfT had good working relationships with Cabinet Office and DHSC but faced challenges around other Departments complying with the agreed process for exemptions, the process for securing red list exemptions, and tracking exemptions.

(e) Industry engagement. DfT undertook extensive, effective engagement with industry, but there were challenges around feeding industry views into Ministers, and strict handling and engagement instructions.

231. To build these lessons into future planning DfT has developed an operating manual based on the experience of Covid, which is provided at Exhibit BK/M7/199 [INQ000527790].

### **Domestic Testing**

232. The Covid-19 Directorate undertook several informal lessons learnt exercises, BK/M7/200 [INQ000527736]. An example relevant to the scope of this Module was in September 2021, following the impact of the July 2021 'pingdemic' on workforce absences. DfT's Workforce Absence team engaged with modal teams to reflect on the surge period of 5 July – 16 August 2021, see Exhibit BK/M7/201 [INQ000049165]. Key findings were to set up a 'Situation Report' or similar document as an efficient way to keep multiple teams up to speed, and to consult with modal teams on reporting patterns and viability of requesting data from industry on certain times/days.

233. Another reflection on the work undertaken through testing to ensure key transport services could run, was that this work provided the Department with more detailed information on the operation of the transport system. This was achieved through the analysis of the key transport hubs, roles, and vulnerabilities within the system. This knowledge should be maintained to ensure that DfT can respond effectively during future crises. This is being fed into planning for future pandemics being undertaken by the Department.

### **STATEMENT OF TRUTH**

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

**Personal Data**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dated:** \_\_\_\_13/05/2025\_\_\_\_\_